

July 20, 2005
Milton, Florida

The Aviation Advisory Committee met on the above date with the following members present: Vice-Chairman James Hopmeier, Randel Compton, Bryon Woram, and Marty Martin. Also present were the County Administrator (Hunter Walker), County Engineer (Roger Blaylock), and Administrative Services Manager (Tammy Simmons). Vice-Chairman Hopmeier called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m.

Martin moved approval of the minutes from the May 18, 2005 meeting; Compton seconded, and the vote carried unanimously. (3-0)

Chairman Issues

Hopmeier said he wishes to start the meeting by discussing Hurricane Dennis and the affect it had on Peter Prince Airport. He said the contractor repairing the hangars was at the airport Saturday installing safety latches on all the doors facing south. Hopmeier said the wind came from a different direction, and the airport took a lot of damage on the north side. He said a lot of people are upset that nothing was secured prior to Saturday morning.

Walker said the county is not collecting rent on the hangars because they are still under construction from Hurricane Ivan. He said the hangars were built in the 90's, and they are not designed to withstand a Category 3 hurricane. Walker said there should not be the expectation that the hangars can stand up against a hurricane. He said the contractor did secure the southern doors which is where most of the damage occurred with Hurricane Ivan.

Hopmeier said the tenants need some kind of explanation. He suggested a letter be sent to the tenants. Hopmeier asked what time frame it will take to repair the north doors.

Blaylock said the repairs will be along the same magnitude as with Hurricane Ivan. He said it will take several months to complete the repairs. Blaylock said the county has not released the contract from Hurricane Ivan repairs. He said many of the aircraft should not have been in the hangars because the county is not charging lease fees. Blaylock said the aircraft were in the hangars at the owner's risk. He said Stephen Furman pushed as hard as he could, and he managed to get the southern doors secured. Blaylock said he anticipates 4 to 6 months to complete Hurricane Dennis repairs.

Hopmeier requested letters be sent to the tenants with a description of the hangars and the wind load the hangars can withstand. Martin said when the hangars were built there were specifications, and the information should be available at the Building Inspection Department. He said he is sorry for anybody that has a loss, but everyone has to understand, the county has been hit with two major natural disasters with a hail storm in the middle of the two disasters. Martin said he personally does not think the county should take any grief over the airport damage from the hangar tenants. He said the tenants need to move their aircraft out of the area if they want their aircraft safe.

Walker said perhaps a letter should be sent to each of the hangar tenants explaining the anticipated process to repair the hangars. Compton asked if a letter was sent to the tenants stating the airplanes were in the hangars at the owner's risk post Hurricane Ivan. Simmons said a letter was sent to the hangar tenants after Hurricane Ivan asking them to remove any personnel items and their airplanes. She said the tenants and the contractor worked together to keep the tenants personnel items in the hangars. Simmons said the tenants chose to stay in the hangars. Walker said the county did not send a letter explaining the dangers of staying in the hangars.

Hopmeier said his intent is not to lay blame on anyone. He said there are upset people who are only concerned with what affects them. Walker said the county has a longstanding relationship with the tenants, and the county could probably do a better job with communication.

Martin asked Simmons when the next insurance review will take place. Simmons said the database is updated as insurance information comes in. She said she can run an updated report.

Dale Holbert said he wishes to speak as a tenant of the airport. He said we are all aware the hangars were not built to withstand a Category 4 or 5 hurricane. Holbert said he was unable to get his airplane out of the area due to a medical problem. He said the May 18, 2005 minutes said "the mitigation for the doors has not been completed, and this will allow for the doors to be anchored down once closed." Holbert said this is about all that can be asked of the county with the present buildings. He said he thought Hurricane Ivan repairs would be completed before a new hurricane season. Holbert said he has received no communication stating, "since the tenants are not paying rent they can not expect the repairs to be completed in a reasonable period of time." He said there should be better communication between the county and tenants. Walker said the repairs at the airport were treated the same as all other repairs though out the county. He said the repairs did not have a higher or lower priority because of the rent.

Hopmeier recommended the county research through the Building Inspection Department to find out what wind load the hangars were designed to meet. He said this information should be communicated to the hangar tenants to let them decide whether to move their aircraft. Blaylock said the contractor doing the repairs and the original builder, Triple A Steel, will be at the airport Friday. He said they will try to stabilize the damaged doors and anything hanging loose.

FBO Issues

Paxton Corwin said Diaz asked him to represent the FBO at tonight's meeting. He said the GCO (Grounds Communication Outlet) is up and running and working great. Corwin said the SRA (Silent Ramp Attendant) unit has been installed and credit cards can be used. He said there have been a lot of problems with the Super Unicom, and the problems are ongoing.

Corwin said there was hurricane damage to airplanes on the ramp. He asked if a notice can be sent to the tenants requesting they contact the FBO when planes are removed from their hangars before a storm. Corwin said the empty hangars can be used for airplanes out on the ramp. Blaylock said this will be an issue with the individual tenants of the hangars.

Flight Watch

Dale Holbert, Flight Watch, said Flight Watch sees a need to address airport issues in a more direct and timely manner. He said there are at least three entities involved in airport management, and the operational needs of the airport are not their primary focus. Holbert said they are overloaded with work in a lot of areas. He said although many projects have been completed, other issues are not addressed in a timely manner as at most airports. Holbert discussed airport security, notice to airmen, the issues with the Super Unicom, and the PAPI lights occasionally being inoperable. He suggested the county have a designated staff person whose primary focus is airport issues.

Hopmeier said security at the airport needs to be moved to top priority. He said he felt security does not meet the intent of the state or federal government on how small airports are supposed to be secured. Hopmeier said he has only found the airport gate locked one time. He said it is not just the county's responsibility to keep the gate locked. Hopmeier said security is a huge issue, and there is a need to communicate with Ingram on the high priority and importance of making the gate work.

Blaylock said the county has had these conversations with Ingram. He said the replacement unit is ordered, but he does not have an update. Blaylock said the automatic gate will be operational as soon as the county can make contact and confirm it. Hopmeier said the parts could be delivered overnight if priority were given to the automatic gate. He said the wrong parts are being used if they can not be obtained overnight. Hopmeier suggested the FBO lock the gate when they leave each day.

Compton said security problems are much better solved at the local level. Blaylock said when the automatic gate worked; the FBO opened the gate during daylight hours while they occupied the airport. He said each evening they reactivated the automatic gate. Blaylock said in the interim, we may have to go to daylight hours only, and this will not be convenient for the tenants. There was continued discussion on an effective way to secure the airport.

Compton said he does not understand why the automatic gate is so hard to implement. He said he has no problem with the gate at Pensacola Airport. Blaylock said the airport is having power supply problems with lightning strikes. Hopmeier said security is more important than additional hangars or taxi ways, and suggested modifying the product to something that works. He said as soon as something goes wrong and we have the state or federal government telling us what to do, no one will be happy. Blaylock asked everyone to manually lock the gate until the gate is activated. Hopmeier suggested some of the airport responsibilities be better defined.

Hopmeier said he felt Emergency Management protocol during an emergency should include the airport. Walker said the airport is an asset overlooked in emergency preparedness. He said the Emergency Management Department has been restructured, and the airport needs to be included. Walker said Holbert is correct in saying, some of the responsibilities of airport operations need to be assigned to specific individuals.

Compton said an emergency generator for fuel at the airport should be a part of emergency preparedness. Hopmeier said not all recovery efforts are government based response. He said the airport should be a part of the recovery process. Hopmeier said FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) should be informed of the condition of the airport after a disaster. He said if materials can not be driven in, they can be flown in. Blaylock recommended the FBO be included in the Emergency Management Plan.

Holbert said Flight Service Station is where pilots look for NOTAM (Notices to Airmen) information on airports. He said they were not aware of the status of the airport after Hurricane Dennis or that there was no fuel available. Holbert said the owner of the airport or a designee needs to consistently issue notices regarding the status of the airport, especially after a disaster. He said all available NOTAM information is not being forwarded to Flight Service in a timely manner. Holbert said NOTAMS are often very important airport safety items.

Other Business/Adjournment

Martin said Santa Rosa County is using Holley Field so there will be smoke in that area. He said in August there will be large planes flying at Choctaw Field and requested everyone use caution. Martin said Whiting Field is behind with flight training so there will be some flying on weekends.

The next scheduled meeting of the Aviation Advisory Committee will be on Wednesday, August 17, 2005 at 5:00 p.m.

Hopmeier thanked county staff for their great job in putting the county back together.

There being no further business to come before the Aviation Advisory Committee at this time, the meeting adjourned at 5:50 p.m.